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THE AINOS OF YEZO, JAPAN.

By Romyn Hitchcock.

The island of Yezo is situated nearly north of the main island of Japan, stretching northeasterly, forming the end of the "silkworm," to which, owing to its shape, the Japanese writers have fancifully compared their country. It is comprised between the parallels of 41° 30′ and 45° 30′ of north latitude, and embraces about six degrees of longitude from the extreme western limit to the longitude of Nemuro. Nemuro is a large and important town situated near the extremity of the most eastern peninsula. It has a good harbor for small vessels, but the entrance is not very safe in bad weather. Looking north, the island of Kunashiri is clearly seen, its snow-capped mountains rising high and gleaming in the August sun. Further to the north and east are Yeterof, or Iturup, and the chain of the Kuriles stretching beyond to Kamtschatka. The Kuriles are, or have been, partly inhabited by a few migratory people who constructed a kind of underground dwellings which are of great interest in connection with the early inhabitants of Yezo.

Almost directly south of the eastern end of Kunashiri, about 50 nautical miles from Nemuro, is the small, almost unknown island Shikotan, in latitude about 33° 45′ north. On this island there is a small colony of the Kurile islanders established there by the Japanese Government. This was visited by the writer of this paper, whose observations there made are the subject of a separate report.

The northwest extremity of Yezo is separated by only about 20 nautical miles from Saghalien. The island is very irregular in shape. Geologically it is composed very largely of volcanic and metamorphic rocks, with here and there limited tracts of alluvium in river valleys and along the coast. The largest of these and by far the most favorably situated for agricultural purposes is in the Ishikari Valley. The Government agricultural college at Sapporo occupies some of the finest and most productive land, and has the advantage of a less rigorous climate than prevails in Yezo generally. At this place grain, vegetables and even fruits of fine quality are abundantly produced. Nevertheless, my observations do not enable me to speak favorably of Yezo as an agricultural country. The climate is too severe, and the soil is not generally suitable, or, where suitable, it is too limited in extent. The total production of rice in 1886 amounted to 16,595 koku (about 85,000

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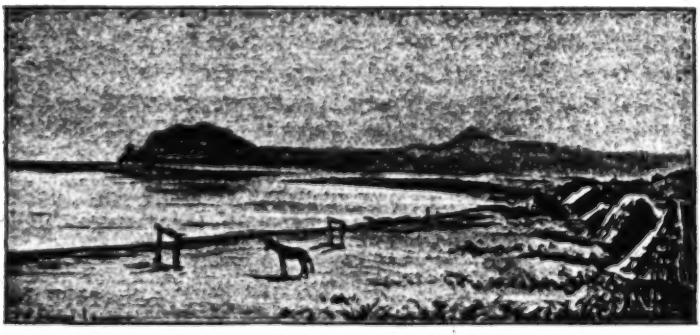
means a grassy plain; and *buto* is a Japanese corruption of the Ainu word *huts*, the mouth of a river. My ponies must have known of this "grassy plain," for they went remarkably well, and I reached the latter village some time before dark, so that I was able to push on to Saru Mombets, a larger village nearly four miles further. Saru Mombets translated means "a tranquil river in a grassy plain," a name thoroughly appropriate to the locality.

There is nothing to interest the traveller along the coast, unless he be a geologist. Almost the whole of the western part of the Iburi district is of volcanic formation. The eastern part is abundant in sandstones, breccias, and shales. In the neighbourhood of Yuhuts, and all along the coast as far west as Horobets, pumice forms the surface soil, showing that in former days frequent eruptions must have taken place. Vegetable mould alternates with pumice. Sand, clay, tufa, with beds of peat and gravel, are the components of the soil which is found filling up the declivities of mountains, covering low-lands and sea-beaches in this part of the island. Specimens of the palæozoic group are found in the pebbles of the Mukawa River and valley, like amphibolite, limestone, phyllite, sandstone, and clay-slate, besides variegated quartzite of greenish and red layers. Primary rocks are common all through Iburi and Hidaka.

The terraces surrounding the Saru valley are mostly wooded with oak, and the swampy region between the Mukawa and Sarubuto has many patches of green grass, and a thick growth of high swamp reeds.



HOROBETS.

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133 Ainu the *Shikarubets Otchirsh*, which translated into English means "the white cliff on the bend of the river." This cliff stands very high, and can be seen from a great distance, especially in a north-east, east, or southerly direction. In winter, when the rushes and reeds are not so high in the south-eastern portion of the plain, the white cliff can be distinguished from the whole of the Tokachi valley. The Ainu themselves use the Shikarubets Otchirsh as a landmark when out hunting bears. Owing to its light colour it is visible even at night. I was anxious to ascend it, as I was sure no European foot had ever trodden on it before. Accompanied by Watanabe Masaru, I started out on horseback and crossed the Frishikobets village and river. Here we left our horses under the care of an Ainu till our return. We had to cross the Tokachi in an Ainu "dug-out," and then, proceeding for several miles in a northerly direction, we arrived at the foot of the mountain. It would have been impossible to climb it on the east side, as it is quite perpendicular; but we were fortunate in getting an Ainu called Unacharo, who said he knew a point from which we could ascend, and that he would show us the way. He had been hunting bears on that mountain, and he knew its slopes well; but as to the way which he was to show us, we had to make it for ourselves. With our large knives we were forced to break, cut, and tear the entangled branches of trees and shrubs before we could get on. We actually had to cut our way through the dense scrubwood until we reached the summit. The ascent was rather dangerous in some places, and extremely rough when going through the brushwood. We had to keep as much as possible near the edge of the cliff, for though it involved more danger if we slipped or stumbled, the entangled shrubs were not so thick on the edge as farther inland. Finally, after several hours' hard work, we reached the top, and were well repaid for our fatigues. The whole of the Tokachi valley was stretched before us as far as the sea, and almost the whole course of the winding river, with all its numerous affluents, could be distinguished like so many shining silver ribbons on the green background formed by the tall grass and reeds. As a farming region the Tokachi valley
[134] and high plains are certainly the most fertile in Hokkaido. All the requisites for successful agriculture can be found there.

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The absence of the mountain masses of volcanic rocks, so common all over Hokkaido, the richness of the soil, the quantity of water for irrigation or for motive power, besides the comparative facility of making roads on such flat ground, are qualities that good farmers do not generally despise. It is therefore a great pity to see all that Tokachi valley practically deserted and so much good land wasted. Hemp, wheat, corn, potatoes, beans, and all kinds of vegetables and cereals, could be grown with advantage, and the produce carried down the river to the sea without much difficulty and at little expense. At Yamakubiro the land begins to rise in a gentle slope, but only to form a plateau, of which the top is another large plain reaching to the foot of the Oputateishike mountain mass. The Otopke Mountain is the highest peak, and resembles in shape the Fujiama of Japan. On the north-east side of this mountain are the hot springs of Ni-piri-bets.[1] A kind of wood is said by the Ainu to be found near these hot springs which is good for curing wounds, cuts, rheumatism, and other ailments. These hot springs are not of much importance, and it is but seldom that even the Ainu themselves visit them. In going to and returning from these springs the Shikarubets Otchirsh is never lost sight of by the Ainu, and by the aid of this landmark they return safely to their homes.

All the Oputateishike mountain mass is volcanic, and forms the backbone of the island of Yezo. From the Shikarubets Otchirsh I was able to draw a bird's-eye view of the course of the Tokachi River and its affluents, which afterwards helped me much in delineating a sketch-map of the Tokachi region, with its complicated watercourses. The two high mountains of Satsumai and Ghifzan could also be plainly seen from there. Coming down was much easier than going up, and when we had again reached the bottom of the mountain we turned northward until we came to the Shoruiwashi River, an affluent of the Tokachi. Previous to this, while following the course of the Otsu River, I saw a strange sight. When on the summit of the Shikarubets Otchirsh I had seen two Ainu "dug-outs" pass up the river, and the Ainu

[1] *Ni*, wood; *piri*, wound; *bets*, river.

of the kind which was believed to be best for arrow poison were localized in their occurence (p. 66). The four types of land cited above were invariably distributed along any river, so that almost all necessary collecting was usually done within a short radius of the *kotan*, or within a day's trip and back at the most. In the case of these particular species that were necessaries and that could only be found a long way from their homes, expeditions were sent out. The task of getting almost all edible plants, as well as varieties for raw materials, was undertaken by women and children.

Cultivation of Plants.

Before the land-allotment to the Ainu by the Japanese Government (Notes 9 and 10), the Ainu in the Otopuke valley and a half of the member households of the local group in Kuttaraushi who lived furthest upstream on the Tokapchi and at least a household in Pipaushi further downstream, had done no farming, but other Ainus in the Tokapchi valley as well as, for instance, those in the Azuma valley, had done some small-scale farming[39]. The old techniques were simpler and the farm work was usually performed by women. The main crops were a variety of Panicum Crusgalli, *piyapa* or *ayushi amam*, and a variety of millet, *amam* or *toita amam* or *munjiro*. Preparation of field and sowing were done in July after storing of chief varieties of edible leaves was finished. Suitable plots on the river bank near their settlement were cleared and levelled with small wooden picks, *shittap*, which were also used for digging up roots and plants. Some families on the Tokapchi used a kind of sickle besides the above-mentioned implement. After the plots were prepared, sowing followed without making any ridges. Weeding was done only once or twice between the time of sowing and the harvest. The crops were harvested by picking ears with an implement made of a molluscan shell collected in the river, dried and stored. These jobs were done during the period between the last part of September and the middle or last part of October. The area cultivated by an average household in Azuma, Saru, Mukawa and Shikot is estimated by the present writer to have been between ca. 1000 and 2000 square metres. When the soil was exhausted the plot was abandoned and a new one prepared. In any valley there seems to have been no shortage of land for cultivation in those days. The cycle of shifting cultivation appears to have varied from area to area.

Food-getting Activities.

Every individual of every species of animals must get its food in order to sustain itself, and food-getting activities may claim to be of basic importance in its existence. Up to comparatively recent times, before the introduction of agriculture in its rudest form, the Ainu had lived by hunting and

1. [Errata: the word "of" should read "to". Cf. errata sheet, p. 164-A--Analyst]
2. [Errata: the word "from" should read "form". Cf. errata sheet, p. 164-A--Analyst]